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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2008

In Today's Papers

National Security Council Discusses Operations into Northern Iraq
All papers report the Turkish National Security Council (MGK) said in a statement after a meeting Thursday the Turkish military would continue to carry out cross-border operations against the PKK terrorists in northern Iraq "whenever necessary." "MGK discussed the importance of improving cooperation with Iraq in political, economic, commercial, energy, cultural, and military fields as well as in increasing humanitarian aid for Iraq," the statement said.

Mainstream Hurriyet says the statement could be seen as green light for a visit of Iraqi President Talabani to Turkey. Mainstream Vatan says Talabani would be invited for a working visit to avoid military welcoming ceremonies.

Papers report that after the MGK meeting, Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Babacan remained in the presidential palace and held a 45-minute meeting with President Gul. Reports speculate the issue discussed at the "mini-summit" was the preparation for new operations into northern Iraq.

Turkey Launches Ground Offensive into Northern Iraq
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Taraf, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, and others report Turkish artillery shelled PKK positions in northern Iraq on Thursday, targeting the PKK camps in Zap, Hakurk, and Avashin. Papers also say the Turkish military build-up on the border has intensified to levels not seen before. Prior to the National Security Council (MGK) meeting yesterday, Turkish fighter jets conducted reconnaissance flights over northern Iraq. There were reports Thursday evening that M-60 tanks were also sent to the border area, and that Turkish artillery shelled the PKK positions in northern Iraq.

Papers report Peshmerge forces spokesman Jabbar Yawar denied there had been fighting Thursday between Peshmerge and Turkish troops inside northern Iraq. The office of the Chief of Turkish General

Staff (TGS,) too, denied in a statement posted on its website there had been clashes between Turks and Peshmerge forces.

Televisions report Friday morning over 10,000 Turkish troops crossed the border into northern Iraq in a ground operation against the PKK.

The TGS said in a statement Friday morning it had launched the ground offensive, backed by fighter aircraft, to attack the PKK terrorists. Televisions say Turkish troops advanced some 10 km inside the Iraqi territories. Turkish correspondents in northern Iraq report the Kurdish regional administration leader Massoud Barzani went to the "operations zone" to see the situation.

Industrialists Demand for Urgent Economic Measures

Radikal, Zaman, Sabah, Hurriyet, Taraf and others: Turkish Industrialists' & Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), Turkish Clothing Industry (TGSD) and Union of Chambers & Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) drew attention to the unemployment problem and asked the government to take necessary measures. Mainstream Sabah summarizes the messages of the industrialists as follows: TUSIAD: "The nearing municipality elections have fueled risks for public finance. The importance of preserving fiscal discipline has increased in the current conjuncture." TOBB: "The markets are in difficult situation because of the tough foreign currency and interest rate policies. The industry needs immediate incentives to increase the competitive power of industrialists." TGSD: "Many companies might be forced to shut down. Hundreds of thousands of people might lose their jobs."

Turkish Constitution Debate at Columbia University Stirs

Controversy: Radikal carried an interview with Dengir Firat, an MP from ruling AKP who is invited to attend a debate at Columbia University on Turkish constitutional draft. Firat confirmed his attendance and said that "we are going there to discuss our

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constitutional system with American experts; we are not going to announce the new constitution there." Regarding the Fethullah Gulen group's involvement as a sponsor to the event, Firat said he was not aware of this. Columnist Hakki Devrim of Radikal daily highlighted this visit as "Our Constitution Draft is Traveling to New York" and questioned the fact that American experts are going to examine new Turkish Constitution while Turkish people have absolutely no idea what the new draft is all about. Columnist Ruhat Mengi of Vatan daily expressed deep concern over this panel and described the event incredible because the draft goes to the US first before it was made it to Turkish public and discussed domestically.

Editorial Opinion on Turkey's Land Operation in Iraq:

"Land Operations are on the Table"

Ferai Tinc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (2/22): "What could be the main reason for Turkey's sporadic ground operation rhetoric? Interestingly enough, Foreign Minister Babacan felt the need to repeat this rhetoric on his way to Moscow. The fact of the matter is that any operation will have to be shaped through consensus between Turkey, Iraq and the US. There may be two reasons for bringing the ground operation option to the public attention. Turkey may decide to enter northern Iraq and take control over a certain area, but this does not seem rational. Also, the ruling AKP uses this rhetoric as a political tool for the domestic audience in order to gain credit. Such an effort can be described as a bad tactic because it creates vengeance. The AKP, just like the previous administrations, has turned over the PKK fight to the hands of military and did not want to be a part of solution process. It is of course a comforting thing for the government to pass the issue to military and be immune from taking political responsibility for solution."

"Barzani Should not Stand Against Turkey"

Yasin Dogan wrote in Islamist leaning-pro government Yeni Safak (2/22): "Earlier this week, Barzani made another irresponsible and provocative statement. He talked about the limits of patience and warns that they are not going to be silent against Turkish army operations. In fact it is Turkey which feels enough is enough. A cross border operation is being considered because northern Iraq has become an active base for PKK attacks against Turkey. Barzani is

providing shelter and support to a terrorist organization, thus his statements insisting he has nothing to do with PKK is far from convincing. He should stop sponsoring the PKK and take every step to get rid of PKK. Turkey has absolutely no interest in the Iraq territory and respects its territorial integrity as long as PKK does not operate there."

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

- Opposition CHP has asked the parliament to initiate an investigation into attacks against Christian clerics in Turkey and Turks in Germany and other European countries.
- Opposition CHP is considering possibilities for applying to the Constitutional Court for the annulment of the law on non-Muslim minority foundations which was approved by the parliament earlier this week.
- The Council of State has upheld a ruling of the lower court, annulling a Council of Ministers decision to allow cyanide gold production in Bergama.
- Risk management working group formed by Turkey's elite business grouping TUSIAD warns that Turkey was among the countries to suffer the biggest losses in global financial markets turmoil.

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International News

- Obama won his 11th straight victory over Clinton in the global primary for Democrats living outside the US.
- President Abdullah Gul sent a message to the newly elected Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, calling for efforts to improve relations.
- On Thursday, the US Navy successfully shot down an inoperable spy satellite before it crashed to Earth.
- Iraqi security forces have been ordered to detain beggars and mentally ill people found on Baghdad's streets to prevent their exploitation by al-Qaeda.

WILSON